

The Imperishable Word of God

1 Peter 1:23-25

Our outline proposed several questions from the text:

I. When Were Believers Enabled to Love?

Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth

II. Who Are Believers to Love?

The object of sincere love: the brethren

III. How Are Believers to Love?

Peter qualifies the command to love with two adverbial expressions: "with a pure heart" and "fervently".

IV. Why Should Believers Love?

So we began v23 with this simple phrase, *Being born again...*

Being [specifically, because we have been] born again

We can genuinely, fervently, sacrificially love the followers Jesus Christ because *it is our nature* to do so...*the new nature by means of the new birth, being born again...*

Conclusion of our study in v22/23a:

It is hard to love some people...they can be rude, proud, impolite, insensitive and unattached.

Nevertheless, we can because

We have been enabled to love...we have been commanded to love...and we have been born into God's family, therefore loving those brothers and sisters in Christ is *inborn* to those who are born from above.

23a *being born again...*

The New Testament teaches that being born again is an act of God in the heart of man.

Kistemaker: The effects of his rebirth are evident in respect to his intellect, his emotions, and his moral disposition. God gives new life to man and man immediately demonstrates this new life in thought, word, and deed.

Notice:

Object	Illustration	Quality
the word of God [v23b]	<u>seed</u>	Incorruptible; liveth and abideth for ever
all flesh [v24a]	<u>grass</u>	<u>withers</u>
all the <u>glory</u> of man [v24b]	<u>flower of grass</u>	<u>falls away</u>
the word of the Lord [v25a]	[seed]	<u>endures</u> for ever

Peter sets forth in these 3 verses two general concepts:

1. All men, and all their vain glory, are temporal, die and fade from mortal memory
2. The word of God, like God Himself, like eternal life, is eternal, lives, abides and endures for ever!

All flesh refers to all humans and animals, and grass refers to the wild grass of the typical Middle Eastern countryside. The phrase all the glory of man as the flower of grass denotes the beauty of that scenery in which colorful flowers occasionally rise above the grass.
Human life is brief in this world. People pass away like dry grass under a withering east wind.

To those who believe, this book is the word of God; it is incorruptible, authoritative, reliable, inspired, inerrant, infallible.

To those who do NOT believe, it is a mere book, made up of men, prone to error, prone to unreliability, prone to corruption, not worthy to be totally believed, and certainly no authority over humanity.

Some preliminary thoughts

- God is (Gen 1:1; Pss 14, 53; Heb 11:6).
- God is true (Exod 34:6; Num 23:19; Deut 32:4; Pss 25:10; 31:6; Isa 65:16; Jer 10:8; 10:11; John 14:6; 17:3; Titus 1:2; Heb 6:18; 1 John 5:20, 21).
- God speaks in harmony with His nature [not ‘nature’ as *in the created world and universe*, but ‘nature’ as *in His wonderful characteristics and qualities* (Num 23:19; 1 Sam 15:29; Rom 3:4; 2 Tim 2:13; Titus 1:2; Heb 6:18)]
- God speaks only truth (Pss 31:5; 119:43, 142, 151, 160; Prov 30:5-6; Isa 65:16; John 17:17; James 1:18)
- God spoke His true word as consistent with His true Nature to be communicated to people (a self-evident truth which is illustrated at 2 Tim 3:16-17; Heb 1:1)

5 Characteristics of God's Word

1. Potent, as seed, having ‘potentiality’: the means of being born again: it produces *faith*, Rom. 10:17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Further, as we shall see, this seed has life and endures forever.

It generates the same in the human heart: life, and life that endures for ever...eternal life!

Jesus described this process of seed and ground, the word of God and our hearts, in Luke 8:4-15

Sower...went out to sow	Those who tell the gospel story to you, whether a family member, friend, work associate, preacher or evangelist
Seed	word of God, the <u>gospel</u> story
Way side	hear, but devil takes word from their <u>heart</u>
Rock [stony] ground	hear, receive with joy; have no <u>root</u> , for a while believe; experience <u>temptation</u> [<u>affliction</u> , <u>tribulation</u> , <u>persecution</u>]; fall away [<u>walk with Him no more</u>]
Thorny ground	have heard; go forth; are choked with <u>cares</u> and riches and pleasures of this life; bring forth no fruit

<u>Good ground</u>	Honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, bring forth fruit with patience [endurance]
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2. Incorruptible: imperishable, in the context of this wonderful 1st chapter of Peter's letter to Turkish Christians, note his use of the concept of *imperishable*:

Our inheritance is not perishable (v. 4); our faith is not perishable (v. 7); our ransom is not perishable (v. 18,19); God's word is not perishable (v. 23).

What's the point? The point is: it lasts. It will not be proved wrong. It will stand as long as God stands. And those who stand on it will not fall -- ever.

Further, the word *incorruptible* means *not subject to decay*; dramatically, when the Bible manuscripts are compared to other ancient writings, they stand alone as the best-preserved literary works of all antiquity.

Remarkably, there are thousands of existing Old Testament manuscripts and fragments copied throughout the Middle East, Mediterranean and European regions that agree phenomenally with each other.

The Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered in Israel in the 1940's and 50's, also provide astounding evidence for the reliability of the ancient transmission of the Jewish Scriptures (Old Testament) in the 1st, 2nd and 3rd centuries BC.

The manuscript evidence for the New Testament is also dramatic, with nearly 25,000 ancient manuscripts discovered and archived so far, at least 5,600 of which are copies and fragments in the original Greek.

Some manuscript texts date to the early second and third centuries, with the time between the original autographs and our earliest existing fragment being a remarkably short 40-60 years. In real terms, the New Testament is easily the best attested ancient writing in terms of the sheer number of documents, the time span between the events and the document, and the variety of documents available to sustain or contradict it.

There is nothing in ancient manuscript evidence to match such textual availability and integrity. It has been scrutinized by literary scholars, and using their various literary tests, the *bibliographic test*, the *internal evidence test* and the *external evidence test*, scientists and scholars have concluded that the Bible in general and the NT in particular are **free of literary corruption** over the sea of time.

3. Liveth: lives, brings life; it is a *life-source*: Strong's concordance defines the Greek word used here for *liveth* as: to live, breathe, be among the living (not lifeless, not dead) to pass life, in the manner of the living and acting; symbolically, to be in full vigour; to be fresh, strong, efficient; as adjective active, powerful, efficacious

4. Abideth for ever: abides; to continue to be, not to perish, to last, endure

The Bible has survived the voyage of time, unlike many writings of ancient civilizations, that are completely lost and gone to obscurity.

5. Endureth for ever: It endures; meaning it continues, remains, stands

Peter is here quoting from Isaiah 40:8, *The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.*

Barnes: *Endureth = unmoved, fixed, permanent.*

v. 25b That saving word is the gospel, as Peter's choice of words indicates. He used *rhemā* in v. 24 for word (rather than *logos*, the more broad reference to Scripture, used in v.23), which

denotes specific statements. It endures for ever. The broad concept of Scripture down to specific words and phrases.

Kistemaker: Verses 24 and 25 demonstrate the unity of Scripture (as well as other doctrines). The readers of Peter's epistle received the Old Testament as the word of God. When the apostles and their helpers preached the gospel of Jesus to them, they accepted it also as God's word. For them both the Old Testament and Christ's gospel had equal authority and validity.

Conclusion:

The word of God is reliable, infallible and inerrant. It has survived over the centuries, changed countless lives, and still gives life to people around the world today.

Life is short and glory is vain and fades from memory.

You can be born again by the word of God and enjoy eternal life with the eternal God through his Son Jesus Christ.

So what?

Have you been born again by the word of God?

What soil is your life like? Like the way side, waiting to be snatched up by the birds? Like the rock, stony ground? Like the thorny ground, full of weeds?

Do you believe the Bible to be the preserved and reliable word of God?

Are you prepared for eternity?